

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6445

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 5298

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, PINT, PEPR, AR, US, OAS

SUBJECT: MORE BITTERNESS OVER THE CARTER OAS SPEECH
AND THE ALENDE VISIT

REF: A) BUENOS AIRES 4943; B) BUENOS AIRES 5079

SUMMARY. WE CONTINUE TO RECEIVE BITTER COMMENTARY CONCERNING THE PRESIDENT'S OAS SPEECH AND THE ALENDE VISIT. BOTH EVENTS ARE SEEN AS PART OF A US CAMPAIGN TO PRESSURE THE GOA INTO PREMATURELY CALLING FOR ELECTIONS AND RESTORING DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS. WE BELIEVE THAT THE PROPAGATION OF SUCH NOTIONS COMPLICATES OUR EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE THE ENHANCEMENT OF PERSONAL RIGHTS IN ARGENTINA. POLICY CLARIFICATION REQUESTED. END SUMMARY.

1. TWO EVENTS CONTINUING TO REVERBERATE IN PRESS COMMENTARY AND PRIVATE CONVERSATION WHICH ARE BEING INTERPRETED HERE AS A BELLWETHER REFLECTION OF A DETERIORATING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARGENTINA AND THE US ARE PRESIDENT CARTER'S OAS SPEECH JUNE 21 AND THE ALLEGED RED CARPET TREATMENT ACCORDED LEFTIST POLITICO OSCAR ALENDE IN WASHINGTON.

2. RETURNING MEMBERS OF THE ARGENTINE OASGA DELEGATION
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IN WASHINGTON ARE ALLEGING THAT THE SEGMENT OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S OAS ADDRESS IN WHICH THE PRESIDENT WARNED THAT COUNTRIES WHICH CONTINUED VIOLATING HUMAN RIGHTS WOULD FIND SUCH A POLICY COSTLY WAS ACCOMPANIED BY ARROGANT, ACCUSATORY FINGER-WAVING AT THE SEEMINGLY ERRANT LATIN AMERICAN DELEGATIONS. (THIS DOESN'T SHOW UP ON OUR ICA VIDEO TAPE BUT THE ALLEGATION

IS A DEMONSTRATION OF THE DEEP WELLS OF LATIN EMOTION BEING STIRRED UP.) FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS ALSO PROFESS TO SEE AS A DELIBERATE OMISSION THE PRESIDENT'S FAILURE TO MENTION THE MALVINAS ISLANDS DISPUTE ALONG WITH THE OTHER TERRITORIAL PROBLEMS IN THE HEMISPHERE WHOSE PEACEFUL RESOLUTION THE US WAS INTERESTED IN FACILITATING. PRESIDENT CARTER'S FAILURE TO MENTION THE MALVINAS IS SEEN AS A CALCULATED RETREAT FROM THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE SIGNED BY SECRETARY VANCE IN BUENOS AIRES LAST NOVEMBER. THE ARGENTINES FIND THIS PARTICULARLY GALLING SINCE THE PRESIDENT MADE SPECIFIC MENTION OF THE BELIZE PROBLEM WITH GREAT BRITAIN (WHICH THE ARGENTINES SEE AS AN ANALOGOUS HEMISPHERIC ISSUE INVOLVING THE SAME EXTRA-CONTINENTAL POWER). FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS VIEW THE OMISSION OF ANY REFERENCE IN THE CARTER SPEECH TO THE MALVINAS AS AN ADDITIONAL EXAMPLE OF US PRESSURE ON THE GOA. WITH A LINE OF REASONING WE FIND CURIOUS, THE ARGENTINES REGARD THIS "PRESSURE" AS AIMED AT GETTING THE CURRENT MILITARY REGIME SPECIFICALLY TO BEGIN THE PROCESS OF RETURNING THE COUNTRY TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT. (THE FAILURE TO INCLUDE ARGENTINA AMONG THOSE COUNTRIES INVITED TO SEND CHIEFS OF STATE TO PANAMA FOR PRESIDENT CARTER'S RECENT VISIT THERE IS SEEN IN SOMEWHAT THE SAME LIGHT.)

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3. OSCAR ALENDE'S RECEPTION IN HIGH PLACES IN WASHINGTON IS ALSO BEING INTERPRETED AS PRESSURE CONNECTED NOT SO MUCH TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTION (IN THE SENSE OF THE INVIOABILITY OF THE PERSON) AS TO THE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT ISSUE. (SEE BUENOS AIRES 5241 (USINFO) FOR TYPICAL PRESS COMMENTARY.) A FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCE TOLD US LAST WEEK THAT ARGENTINE OFFICIALS ARE SERIOUSLY DISTURBED BY WHAT THEY CONSIDER TO BE US INSISTENCE UPON "DEMOCRATIC" ELECTIONS AS A HUMAN RIGHTS REQUIREMENT, WHEN THEY FEEL ARGENTINA WOULD BE BADLY SERVED BY AN ABRUPT CALL FOR ELECTIONS AND THE INEVITABLE RETURN OF CORRUPT, OPPORTUNISTIC AND DISCREDITED POLITICAL FIGURES. EVERY TIME THE US LOUDLY APPLAUDS DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS ON THE CONTINENT--IN COLOMBIA, PERU OR THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC--GOA OFFICIALS TREMBLE, REMARKED THE MINISTRY SOURCE. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPROVEMENTS WILL CONTINUE TO COME AS INTERNAL SECURITY IS RESTORED, THIS OFFICIAL ALLEGED, BUT ARGENTINA CANNOT RISK RETURNING THE COUNTRY TO THE IRRESPONSIBLE LIKES OF ALENDE, SIMPLY TO CURRY FAVOR WITH THE US.

4. THIS PAST WEEKEND BUENOS AIRES HERALD COLUMNIST

JAMES NEILSON ADDED HIS ACID COMMENTARY TO THE MANY JOURNALISTS WHO HAVE BEEN HAVING A FIELD DAY WITH THE ALENDE VISIT. SAID NEILSON: "ALTHOUGH ALENDE HAS NEVER BEEN TAKEN VERY SERIOUSLY HERE, LAST WEEK HE WAS BEING LIONIZED IN THE US. PERHAPS, PEOPLE THERE ARE CONFUSING HIM WITH SOMEONE ELSE... HE IS NOT EVEN THE BRAVE FIGHTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS HIS HOSTS PROCLAIM. HOW MANY HEARD A SQUEAK OUT OF HIM FROM LATE 1975 TO THE MIDDLE OF 1977..." POINTING OUT THAT THE POPULAR REVOLUTIONARY ALLIANCE FOR WHICH ALENDE RAN FOR THE PRESIDENCY IN 1973 WAS DOMINATED BY THE COMMUNIST PARTY ("SO PRESUMABLY HE HAS NO OBJECTIONS AT ALL TO THE MURDER OR MALTREATMENT OF MILLIONS AS LONG AS IT IS IN AN ANTI-CAPITALIST CAUSE"), NEILSON CONCLUDES THAT "IT IS TRAGIC THAT SO MANY

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HYPOCRITICAL OPPORTUNISTS HAVE THE HUTZPAH (NOW) TO JUMP ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS BANDWAGON. THEY GIVE THE CAUSE A BAD NAME, MAKING IT EASY FOR RIGHT-WING AUTHORITARIANS TO SAY PROTESTS AGAINST ARBITRARY

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ARREST, TORTURE AND MURDER ARE ALL PART OF A COMMIE ANTI-ARGENTINE PLOT."

5. NEILSON GOES ON TO POINT OUT "IT IS HARD TO SQUARE THE WARM WELCOME GIVEN ALENDE BY LEADING US DIGNITARIES WITH ALENDE'S STRIDENT VIEWS ON THEIR COUNTRY. LIKE

MANY OTHER LATIN AMERICAN POPULISTS, ALENDE HAS BASED HIS POLITICAL CAREER ON HATE FOR THE US AND THE US PEOPLE."

6. COMMENT: MANY ARGENTINES, BOTH FOR OR AGAINST THE CURRENT MILITARY GOVERNMENT, SEE OUR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY AS A FACADE FOR PRESSURING THE MILITARY TO RETURN THE GOVERNMENT TO CIVILIAN RULE. (THOSE IN THE GOVERNMENT SEE A HOST OF OTHER PHANTOMS IN OUR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY AND OFFICIAL US STATEMENTS, AS WELL.) YET, FOR THE ORGANIZED POLITICAL AND LABOR ELEMENTS IN OPPOSITION TO THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT--LIKE ALENDE--THE NARROW QUESTION OF VIOLATIONS OF PERSONAL RIGHTS OR EVEN WHETHER OR NOT THE MILITARY SHOULD REMAIN IN POWER RUNS SECONDARY TO THEIR OWN PRIMARY INTEREST IN THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC MODEL UNDER WHICH THE COUNTRY SHOULD OPERATE. BACKROOM BARGAINING BETWEEN MILITARY OFFICIALS IN GOVERNMENT (E.G., MASSERA NOW--POSSIBLY A VIOLA OR SOME OTHER ARMY FIGURE IN THE MEDIUM-TERM FUTURE) AND OPPOSITION POLITICAL-LABOR REPRESENTATIVES IS A WELL-CONFIDENTIAL

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KNOWN ARGENTINE PHENOMENON. THE ISSUE THEY BARGAIN ABOUT, OF COURSE, IS NOT WHEN THE MILITARY SHOULD PULL OUT OF GOVERNMENT, BUT RATHER THE "PARTICIPATION" OF THE POPULIST/ NATIONALIST POLITICIANS IN THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC DECISIONMAKING, I.E., DUMPING MARTINEZ DE HOZ' ECONOMIC POLICIES.

7. WE BELIEVE THAT OUR FIRST PRIORITY OBJECTIVE OF GETTING THE VIDELA GOVERNMENT AND THE ARMED FORCES TO RESTORE DUE PROCESS AND REDUCE HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IS DIFFICULT ENOUGH TO ACHIEVE WITHOUT COMPLICATING THE ISSUE BY PREMATURELY ACCELERATING OUR LONG-TERM REDEMOCRATIZATION GOAL AT A TIME WHEN NEITHER THE MILITARY PSYCHE NOR CIVILIAN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IS PREPARED FOR A TURNOVER TO DEMOCRATIC RULE. OUR ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE RESTORATION OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS SHOULD BE AIMED AT FULFILLING THE CURRENT POLITICAL VOID IN A WAY THAT MAXIMIZES THE PROSPECTS FOR LONG-TERM DEMOCRATIC GROWTH AND POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STABILITY. THE ISSUES INVOLVED WERE OUTLINED IN OUR AMBASSADOR'S GOALS AND OBJECTIVES DRAFT (A-19 OF MARCH 9, 1978). EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S COMMENTS IF THERE IS ANY DISAGREEMENT ON THIS QUESTION AND IF WASHINGTON POLICYMAKERS ARE PROCEEDING WITH A DIFFERENT SET OF ASSUMPTIONS.
HIGGINS

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